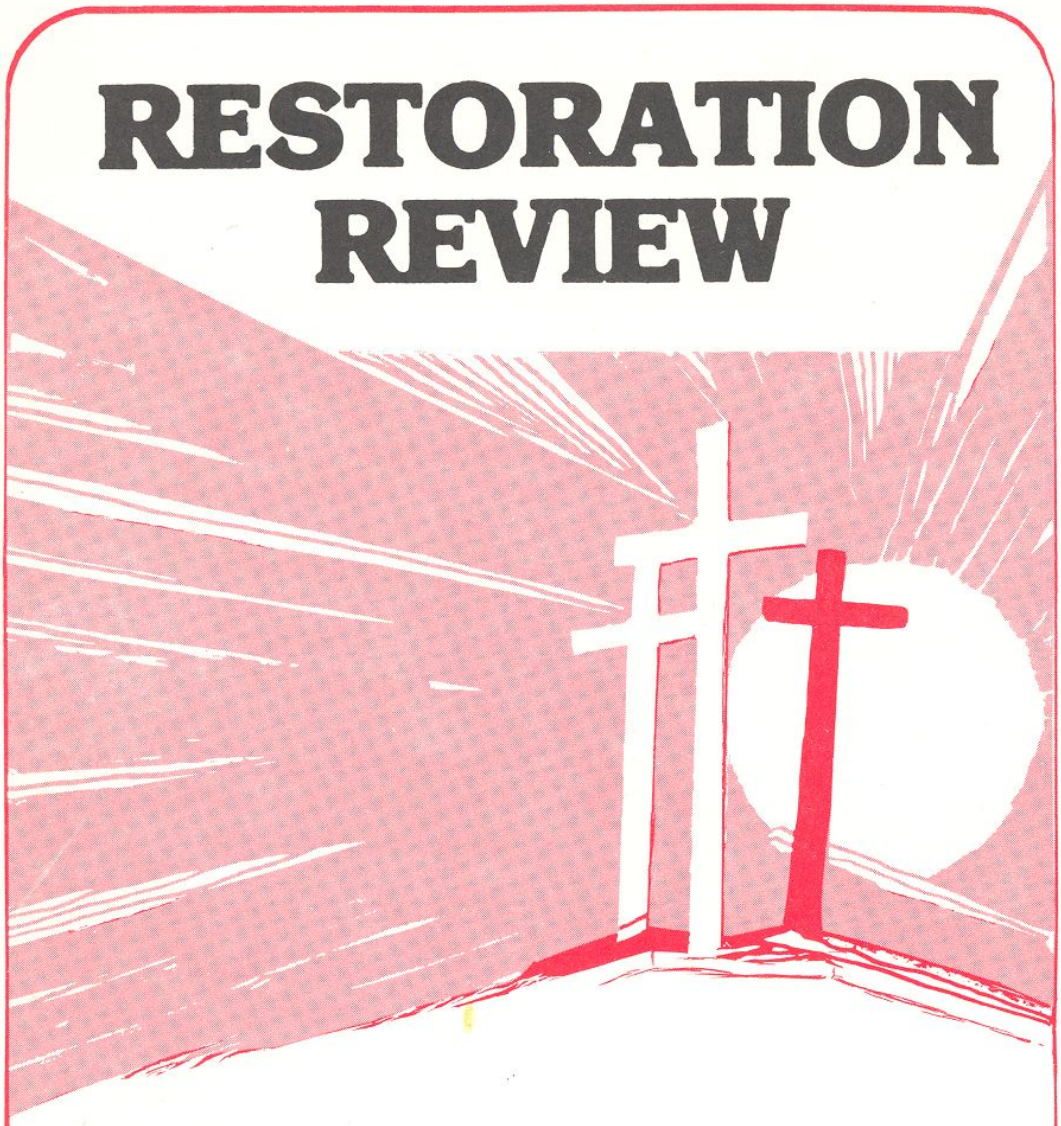
RESTORATION REVIEW



The differences that divide Christ's people now are fewer and far less formidable than in any period since the Reformation. Nevertheless, such as they are, they require mutual interpretation and reconciliation. — Charles Clayton Morrison in *The Unfinished Reformation.*

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The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View. . .

OUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

Some years back a woman philosopher concluded her remarks about the marvels of nature with "I accept the universe." Some of her colleagues considered it an odd statement, one of them quipping, "My God, she'd better!"

In her defense I suggest that her attitude of acceptance has merit, not to imply that the universe is in any wise dependent on the acceptance of any of us. But the lady could have meant that as one stands in awe before the bewildering universe about all she can do is to accept it humbly. She may have been saying that one can accept it, with all of its mysteries, better than she can explain it. Perhaps she was saying that the universe doesn't have to be explained, but simply accepted, in faith. Even scientists "walk by faith" more than they may realize.

Shakespeare may have thought like that woman when he wrote, "In nature's infinite book of secrecy, A little I can read." But it was Blaise Pascal, who was eminently Christian, who said it best of all:

> All this visible universe is only an imperceptible point in the vast bosom of nature. The mind of man cannot grasp it. It is vain that we try to stretch our conceptions beyond all imaginable space; We bring before the mind's eye merely atoms in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere, of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. In short, the strongest proof of God is that our imagination loses itself in the conception.

Awed as they were, Shakespeare and Pascal lived in an age when man supposed his own universe (our galaxy) was all there is, which was clearly enough! But now scientists speak of hundreds, perhaps even *thousands* of millions of galaxies. Each galaxy has *billions* of solar masses, some having as many as 200 billion. The distances involved are overwhelming, such as one galaxy that has been measured as being 1,200 million light-years from us. You know that a light-year is the distance light travels, at 186,000 miles per second, in a year, which makes a light-year about six million million miles. Multiply that by 1,200 million and you get some notion of what "space" is about.

But that is only a small part of the story, for space is apparently infinite, and the galaxies keep moving farther out into space, farther from us and farther from each other. And there are billions and billions of stars even in our own galaxy, multiplied trillions

throughout the universe. And astronomers figure that there are galaxies beyond the known galaxies, ad infinitum. Pascal was right in saying that infinite space is beyond our comprehension. It is baffling to imagine a space ship off course moving endlessly into space, *forever.* I suppose Einstein would say that the ship would move in a curve rather than a straight line since space is curved, assuming the ship to be mobile. But what is infinite curved space?

Everything is moving, turning on its axis or rotating or both. Our little earth, hardly of respectable size in this larger picture, does both. Not only do we make a complete turn every 24 hours, but we travel 186 million miles in our journey around the sun every year. How shattering it must have been when Copernicus laid bare the fact that this earth is not the center of the universe with everything revolving around it, but hardly more than a speck that revolves around the sun, along with other planets. And now we know there are countless suns (stars), solar systems, and galaxies. Should we be tossed at random into our larger universe with the power to move as fast as light, we might search forever and never find our earth. It should humble us, to say the least, that in terms of the vast physical universe we do not count for much.

We have come a long way since man believed that this earth was the center of all reality, mounted on an elephant's back that stood on a giant turtle. One wonders if anyone bothered to ask what the turtle stood on!

Perhaps things have happened too fast. Much of what we call "modern civilization" --- the printing press, the cotton gin, the steam engine, the telescope and microscope, the automobile and the airplane, radio and TV, and finally the space age --- are of recent date. Jesus and those who walked with him knew of no such world, and we may presume that they viewed the universe as did other prescientific men. Maybe it doesn't matter, for the kingdom of God does not depend on modern science, even if the kingdom might use modern science. Some of us may feel as did Herbert Hoover at the launching of Telstar: "The electronics men have gone beyond my comprehension. I belong to a generation that just doesn't grasp all that."

Among the things beyond my grasp is that there are these distant stars that may have ceased to exist millions of years ago, but still we see them! And I can hardly believe it when astronomers tell of distant galaxies that send out radio waves that they can now read on their receivers! Man spent centuries inventing ways to send out radio waves, but the stars have been doing it all along, without any help from us! Then there is gravity everywhere, they tell us, otherwise the galaxies would run together in one vast mass of matter! And everything is moving, rotating, evolving, changing, some things very slowly and others very rapidly, as if they were on schedule, and it is more orderly than chaotic.

The evidence would suggest that there is someone in charge, whom Aristotle was content to call the Unmoved Mover, but the scientists do not concern themselves especially with that question.

Harrison Brown, an expert on the composition of meteorites, is my favorite physical scientist, perhaps because he concedes that life may be a miracle. He thinks we might one day find life on Mars or Venus (the moon is too small and Jupiter too large; Mercury is too hot and Neptune too cold), and in that event the implications would be staggering. He points out that there must be a million billion stars or suns that have planets traveling in orbit about them. So if there is life on Mars, Brown insists, there could easily be a thousand billion planets in our visible universe with intelligent life of some kind!

The Creator could, of course, have many, many kinds of beings besides human beings and angels. And if there were other beings similar to our physical and mental makeup they would not necessarily have to be flawed by sin like human kind. The Creator could well be conducting dramas of infinite variety on stages throughout the universe. And since the promise is ours of “new heavens and new earth” it may be that distant galaxies will playa part in the blessings of the redeemed. Wouldn’t it be something to visit the Father’s glorious handiwork in an eternity of galaxies, moving from one to another as rapidly as the mind can think? And since it is virtually certain that we will have work to do in eternity, we might have assignments on these distant planets, which will no longer be distant.

All of this is of course speculation, but speculation is in order in the face of the universe of which we are a part. The poet David speculated as he was awed by such wonders as we are now discussing. “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers,” he mused before the Creator, “the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him.” (Ps. 8:3). And if the psalmist had known of the far reaching galaxies, he would have been sure that God had not only placed them there but that he was there, for he could write:

Where can I go from thy Spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there thy hand shall hold me. (Psa. 139)

Here we have the only answer we need regarding our place in what we now know to be an immense universe: *God is its creator and he is in control.* And as for our insignificant little earth that insignificance is our glory, for the Creator himself has visited our planet and made us in his own image. Whatever he may have done elsewhere in the universe, nothing detracts from that great truth. “God so loved the world that he gave his own son” shows us where we stand, regardless of the measure of his grace elsewhere. And what can excel the gift of the Father giving himself? So we must conclude that no other creatures are as wonderfully blessed, perhaps because they do not need to be.

That modern science helps us to believe in an ordered and purposeful universe may be illustrated by facts recently discovered about the lowly atom, which is a universe all of its own. One scientist, so as to show how tiny an atom is, observed that if all the atoms in an average human body (an octillion in number) were turned into garden peas it would take not only the earth and 250 planets of our own system to hold them (at a depth of four feet), but 250,000 planets in the farther reaches of space, each the size of the earth, to hold them all, an octillion peas! So we can see that we have a complicated universe of minute realities within our own bodies.

This is especially evident when we move inside the atom and take a look. This same scientist noted that if by some magic pill a human body grew to be 150 million miles tall (he could hold Venus in one hand and Mercury in the other!), an atom would then be about the size of an indoor football stadium. Stepping inside this expanded atom, one would see some twenty luminous balls the size of footballs, moving in great circles like planets around the sun. These are electrons, and they are held on course by a tiny whirling point of light the size of the head of a pin, which is the atomic “sun” or the nucleus of the atom. This is the center of atomic power, which, even when the atom is expanded to the size of a football field is still no larger than a pin head.

The rest of the atom, which is most of it, is empty space, which means that if our bodies had all the “space” squeezed out we would be a bare speck!

Recent study of the atom reveals that there is more going on than orbiting neutrons. There are ripples and waves, such as one sees when a stone is thrown into water, and these fill the entire atom and form wave patterns. If we could put on an atomic hearing aid we would hear music like a hundred great pipe organs playing at once. One atom “sings” and it is answered by all other atoms, so that the total human body (and all matter) is music. The old philosophers had a point, according to modern science, when they spoke of “the music of the spheres.” Atoms are music, which means that everything, including the vast recesses of our universe, is one grand musical concert!

Scientists do not know what this music is, but it is evident that there is more involved than mere mechanical processes. While science once supposed that the whole is the sum total of the parts, they now see that the whole is *more* than the sum total of the parts. They now speak of “spark of life” or “spirit” or “soul” in explaining the nature of things. Now that we can view the universe as “a new invisible world of music,” as one scientist puts it, we can see that there is a place for faith.

And all this magnanimity should have some impact on our everyday life, at least in the way it did on Sam Golden, who told this story years ago in *The South Carolina Israelite.* The waitress had brought him lima beans instead of the green beans he ordered. In his fury he insisted that she get his order right, but while she was doing so he got to thinking about the universe --- the speed of light, the distant stars and galaxies, the movement of the planets. By the time she returned he was saying to himself, “What the hell does it matter whether I got green beans or limas!” Perhaps more of that kind of “universal” thinking would stop quarrels at home and at church before they ever start.

The Christian’s affirmation has always been what science now confirms: about five billion years ago (or however long) there was an initial event, a time when everything started, a time of creation. Since all these things seem traceable to light, the answer is in Scripture: in the beginning God said, *Let there be light,* and there was light. Do we really need any other answer, regardless of the immensity of the mystery?

And this gives us faith that God has not only put purpose and order in all things, but that he remains in control and will use them all to his glory.

While writing these words a neighbor, who is a teacher, showed me the wasp nest a little one gave to her, awed as he was by its intricate design that no hands could make. The God that put purpose and design in the atoms of the naughty wasp, who can build its nest without a single lesson, has endowed the vast universe with something of himself.

If we see nothing else in this kind of thinking, we can at least realize that, like that little boy, we ought to be awed. And if we can be sufficiently awed by God’s handiwork, that may be enough. That might be reason enough for him hanging it all out there for us to see, study, and explore.

What a tragedy it is if we never look up and wonder! --- *the Editor*

All the pictures which science now draws of nature and which alone seem capable of according with observational fact are mathematical pictures . . . From the intrinsic evidence of his creation, the Great Architect of the Universe now begins to appear as a pure mathematician. --- *Sir James Hopwood Jeans*

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A PHILOSOPHY OF SELF IMPROVEMENT

Since I am in this volume sharing ideas in reference to my own philosophy or world view, I want to tell you some things about one of my most admired friends, Leonard Read, founder of the Foundation for Economic Education, who died only this year at the grand old age of 85. He spent most of those years in search of ideas, truths to live by, and he was a master teacher of those ideas, even though he insisted that none of them was original with him.

Basic to Leonard's philosophy was that we change our world by changing ourselves. He never tried to reform others, only himself. Continual self improvement was his rule, and he never stopped learning. He lived an exuberant life, mainly because he lived in a world of ideas, ideas that enriched and improved his life. He once said something to the effect that he would give a thousand dollars for a good idea, for a good idea is worth far more than dollars. But to Leonard it all added up to self-improvement, for to him this was the secret of the good life.

He was suspicious of "causes" or "campaigns" against this or that system of error. He did not seem to be *anti* anything. He insisted that we best oppose darkness by being the light of the world. Darkness is but the absence of light, he insisted, and we do not have to be specialists against any system of error, but only to let our light shine. He had this electric candle that would burn at various levels of intensity. Darkening the room to the degree that we could not even see each other, he would turn the candle to a bare flicker, which provided enough light for us to see dimly. Light drives away the darkness, he would exuberate, as he turned up the candle until the room was bathed in light.

One important lesson Leonard impressed upon me was that those who struggle for truth do not have a numbers problem, just as the merchants of error do not have to have a majority. It is the committed few that make a difference, whether for weal or woe. It is a disturbing fact that the Communist party that took over Russia was smaller than the Communist party now is in the United States. Leonard is a good example of what just one man with the right ideas can do, along with "the will to prevail," another of his themes.

While Leonard was an economist and not a theologian, his writings are rich in biblical truths, one being his reliance on a "turn the other cheek" attitude toward distractors. He liked to tell the story of the California gentleman who wrote him a vicious letter after reading one of his pieces. Leonard responded with his usual "treatment," a gracious letter. This led to a lasting friendship. Years later Leonard reminded his friend of that first letter and asked, "If I had responded in like kind, would we now be friends?" The answer was obvious. He then placed an envelope against the windshield of the car, holding it there with his finger. "It is tension created by my finger that holds the envelope there," he explained "so when I remove my finger the tension is released and the envelope falls." So it is with harsh feelings; they fall when the tension is removed. The rule to follow in responding to your critics is to provide them nothing to scratch against. He was fond of the old Arab proverb, "He who strikes the second blow starts the fight."

Many of us in the church have not yet learned what to Leonard Read, a much-criticized man, was a way of life: *take no cognizance whatsoever of a person's meanness.* Nor should we be influenced by the praises of our friends!

And Leonard had his ideal morning prayer: "May I be graced with a thought for this day which, upon reflection, will upgrade my awareness, perception, consciousness."

Believing as he did in economic freedom, Read taught that charity cannot be a matter of governmental coercion but of personal liberty, with each person determining the limits of his obligations. He had an amusing way of expressing this: "Because I take pity upon the poor bird that is injured by flying against my window does not mean that I am obligated to take care of every damned bird in the world!"

I am impressed with Leonard's pithy, "The road is always better than the inn." And he wrote essays on the blessings of adversity, observing that his most productive work was under the most adverse circumstances. While most of us are tempted to prefer the inn, Leonard would urge us to get back on the road and keep moving, especially when the going is rough.

One of his popular essays was "I the Pencil," in which he noted that no one person has the know-how to produce the humble ten-cent pencil. In fact it took centuries of progress, with multitudes contributing to the depository of knowledge, to come up with such matter-of-fact items. And not only is the lowly pencil a miracle, but so is the free market that makes it possible for us to have such things for mere pennies.

Read has helped me as an editor to keep my ends and means in perspective. I have my goals in this publication, but Leonard has cautioned that goals cannot be pursued without regard to the means used to attain said goals. Indeed, if the goals are worthy, as we believe

ours are, then the goals dictate the means, or the means are inherent in the quality of the goals.

If I plead for the unity of the church and for the acceptance of all believers as equals, I cannot use manipulative, coercive tactics. I cannot have an ax to grind or hobbies to ride, and certainly I cannot be on an ego trip. My labors must reflect the wisdom of the Chinese Christian who prayed, "Lord, reform your church, beginning with me!" I cannot be a know-it-all. Like Read and like Socrates, I must believe that the unexamined life is not worth living. A journal that is not self-critical and introspective is not worth publishing! I may have a quarrel with the modern church, but it is a lover's quarrel, and I accept its problems as my own.

Leonard taught me one of the most important means of all: *allow a work to live by its own merit.* If it provides *light* in this dark world of ours,' those who love light will rally to its support, *without any coercive or manipulative measures.*

This journal, along with its predecessor, is now almost a third of a century old, and it has never (except for the first few years when I did not know better!) asked for money. No board underwrites it and no church supports it. Still we depend on gifts to continue, but there is always enough. Like Leonard Read who insisted that his Foundation should never be on "easy street" and should always have to prove itself to those who would support it, I am quite willing for this journal to close down when it no longer merits support.

Nor does our cause depend upon gimmickry or placards or flag-waving or demonstrations. I believe in moral suasion, in principles and ideas, and in a fair, quiet teaching ministry. Jesus did not carry placards or lead demonstrations. He never imposed himself; the people came to him. "He opened his mouth and taught the people, saying. . ," the record tells us. That's not bad! And he taught us the means: "A sower went forth *to sow.*" That is my philosophy, as it was Leonard Read's: to sow, sow, sow, and keep sowing. Renewal and harvest, beginning with oneself!

And it is very important to believe that God will provide the increase. --- *the Editor*

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Highlights in Restoration History . . .

MEET A DIFFERENT BREED OF RESTORATIONISTS

Those who choose to refer to our heritage as "the Restoration Movement" are obligated to accept the ambiguity of the term. We learn in logic that a good definition must be both inclusive and exclusive in that it must be broad enough to *include* all of its class and yet narrow enough to *exclude* things similar but different. I have had fun with students in defining such a word as *boot* in such a way as to include all boots, even baby boots, and yet exclude all shoes, even high top shoes. I recall that we came up with something like: "Footware, usually made of leather or rubber, that covers the foot and more or less the leg."

"Restoration Movement" as a defining term of the Stone-Campbell Movement would have a rough time of it in a logic class, assuming the students had the facts. It violates both rules in that it is too broad and too narrow. We cannot be "the Restoration Movement" simply because there is no such thing, unless perchance one refers to all the nearly 200 restoration sects as "the Restoration Movement." So it is too broad a term for what our people intend, for it would have to include the Mormons and the Plymouth Brethren, who are restorationists, to name just two.

The term is also too narrow as a description of our heritage in that restoration was but one facet, even a subordinate facet, of our heritage. It was primarily a unity movement. We would do better, therefore, simply to refer to "our heritage" or "our Movement" or "the Stone-Campbell Movement." It is noteworthy that our pioneers nearly always referred to their efforts as "the Reformation," but Campbell's term "the New Reformation" is a better definition.

It is interesting what has happened to us along this line, for these days we actually disparage reformation in favor of restoration. A recent article in *Firm Foundation* on "Restoration, Not Reformation" is typical. That is made to mean that one can't reform existing Christianity, so the true church of the New Testament must be restored. Each group (at least 176 of them!) presumes itself to be that one, true, restored church. This is not what our pioneers believed, not even when they occasionally used the term *restoration.*

Does it not impress you that something is drastically wrong when restorationists come up with 176 different interpretations as to what constitutes "the restored church" of the New Testament? It may help for me to introduce to you with some detail one of these groups, a "restoration" church that you probably have never heard of, and it may well out-restoration "the Restoration Movement" (meaning us!).

The Old German Baptist Brethren, who came to America in 1719, trace themselves back to the Anabaptists, who believed in "restoration, not reformation" in that they rejected the Protestant Reformation. As restorationists always do, the Anabaptists divided and subdivided, resulting in such sects as the Amish and Mennonites. The Old German Baptist Brethren is one more of these Anabaptist sects.

They admit to being separatists, rejecting other churches, and deny being Protestant. The New Testament is their only creed. As restorationists they are dedicated to restoring the primitive church in its purity. Some of their practices will be familiar to you, while others may challenge you, depending on how "restorationist" you are.

1. They baptize by triune (three times) immersion, based on Mt. 28:19.

2. They wash one another's feet as both a command and an example (Jn. 13:4-17).

3. They take the Lord's Supper at night (Jn. 13:30) and tarry one for another (1 Cor. 11:33-34).

4. They greet one another with a holy kiss, and cite several passages for this.

5. They anoint and lay hands on the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).

6. The sisters cover their heads while the brothers uncover theirs (1 Cor. 11:3-10).

7. They labor for nonconformity to the world in its vain and wicked customs (Rom. 12:2 is their most quoted passage).

8. They do not go to law (1 Cor. 6:1-8).

9. Musical instruments are not used in worship (they quote the same passages we do about *singing*, along with Amos 6:5!!!)

10. Divorce allowed only for cause of fornication (Mt. 19:9).

And you thought *you* were "the Restoration Movement" and the one, true restored church! Never try to outdo the Germans!

Here are all the ingredients of restorationism. They are separatists, non-Protestant, primitivists in that they assume to "reproduce" the primitive church, and a proof text for every unique practice.

The Mormons, of course, would add baptism for the dead - and a proof text! But they would reject the list of the Old Brethren, which is always the case with restorationists. They are all very selective, choosing only what they want to practice, rejecting what they find distasteful, even when others provide the proof text.

And they all divide, again and again. The Old German Baptist Church divided in this country in 1921 over the use of the automobile.

I of course accept the dear Old German Brethren as equals in the Lord, and I respect them for their convictions and salute them for being more consistent "restorers" than Christian Churches-Churches of Christ. We are only saying that restorationism is a problem wherever it is found, and the bottom line of that problem is more and more sects for an already divided church. --- *the Editor*

Until restoration advocates "catch up" with their founding fathers by providing fellowship with large liberty for honest convictions arising from study of the New Testament, they will continue to proliferate Churches of Christ Number One, Two, etc. --- A. T. DeGroot, *New Possibilities for Disciples and Independents.*

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MATERIALISM: NOT ALL BAD

Robert Meyers

"The world is too much with us," Wordsworth said, and after a bit of coaxing I can always get my students to say that he means "materialism" when he says "the world." But poets and preachers alike sometimes distort a half-truth by underscoring it. Materialism takes an undeserved beating in some sermons, because it isn't matter that's opposed to spirit (the two were designed to go together). What is opposed to spirit is perverted matter, uncared-for matter, unloved and unlovely matter.

I remember a superb essay about this topic from Robert Capon in an old and now-lost issue of the religious magazine, *Dominion.* He says we need to work up a Christian materialism in which we value matter as it ought to be valued. We have far too many things not because of what they *are,* but because of what they *confer on us.* We do not really care about them, so they serve us badly, and after a while we discard them. We produce so much there isn't time or room to keep it. What is sad, though, is that wonder goes into the trash can along with it.

When a little boy finds an old electric motor in the trash, he loves its weight, its windings, and the silent turning of it. When he gets it home his mother tells him to throw it out. Probably he cries. This is his first and truest reaction to the affluent society. He usually forgets it, but we shouldn't. He is sane; society isn't. He possesses because he cares. We don't.

Everything comes so quickly and easily now, Capon argues, that we tend to care less and less because we have little stake in what we own or enjoy. When we had to dress up and go to the theater we had our care reinforced: we had a stake in the venture. But when we need only throw a switch on the box in the living room, our care grows weaker. We are satisfied with less enjoyment, to which we give minimal attention. Boys who once spent hours per day learning to fashion something with loving care now pick it up for 98¢ in the department store, play with it for half an hour, and throw it away. They miss the discipline of learning how caring blesses work, and work reinforces caring.

Capon sees hobbies as probably the largest single area where people may still care deeply. Hobbies are not mere diversions, he points out, but concentrations. His language suddenly takes on the color of religious rhetoric:

"The model locomotive builder at his basement bench is a priestly recluse. The ski enthusiast practicing alone on the slope is a true hermit of the natural religion of things. Man is set apart in order to offer and to worship. The hobbyist sees his vocation precisely as a personal call to do it yourself."

Because we have a society that cares less and less, says Capon, we are now surrounded by fakes. "The average house if full of fakes: fake drawer pulls and fake drawers; cast-iron trivets made of plastic, and table lamps made out of fake coffee grinders; fake pastry and fake whipped cream; cheeses spread full of vegetable gum; and not even an old jar of unhydrogenated peanut butter to take the curse off it all.

"Care does not come in a pressurized can; accordingly, it is not our kind of item. We use, but we use without attention and without appreciation. We sometimes have a general notion of what is excellent, but we can't manage the detail required to produce it. *We just don't care enough to bother."* (Italics mine: rrm)

I trust it to be obvious why these comments should be reprinted in a religious journal. The same disease of indifference infects all religious enterprises. A rare person here or there cares, is willing to take infinite time with a project of giving or learning, and can wait for the results without impatience. But most of us, brought up on a "quickie" diet of fake objects and embossed designs, want fast results. If we do not get them, we lose interest and move impatiently to some other endeavor which promises to give them.

The "will of God" is not the death of a baby before its time, or the havoc of a tornado, or the blight of an earthquake. The "will of God" is when the parents, having fought hard against a dread disease threatening their child, win. The "will of God" is when we find the polio vaccine at last, and when (may the day come quickly!) we make a breakthrough in the war against cancer. The "will of God" is an alcoholic's return from never-never land to sobriety. . . .

These are things bright, beautiful, good. The "will of God" is always, for every life, that particular life's most perfect unfolding. And the "will of God" is that all of us shall do battle with Him so that these things can be.

Cleland McAfee and Katherine Parker, in *Near to the Heart of God,* tells a provocative story:

"Passengers on the *Baltic* on that voyage in 1910 when the Republic sank and its passengers were brought back by the *Baltic* will never forget how the great rescuing steamer sailed round and round after reaching the supposed location of the injured vessel, whistling dismally and poking its nose through the fog, trying to find the ship. All afternoon the search went on, and when night came most of the passengers felt sinking hearts in the thought that now it would be impossible to bring rescue until morning. That was their mistake, for as the night grew darker it became possible to see the lights of the doomed vessel, and presently that which could not be found in the foggy light of the day became clear in the darkness of the night."

You and I have been there.

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ARE WE ALL WRONG ABOUT SOME THINGS?

I might never have thought of this question had it not been raised in the *Guardian of Truth* in a challenge to Arnold Hardin of Dallas, who stated in his church bulletin that "We are all wrong about some things." Carrol R. Sutton of Albertville, AI. asks Arnold to name some of the things that he (Arnold) is wrong about. The Alabama brother invites any of us who are interested to join in the discussion.

I am impressed with the question and consider it an appropriate one, even if it may be motivated in part to "get" Arnold, which is not atypical of said journal.

Brother Sutton also asks, "How do you know that 'all of us are wrong about some things'?," as if to suggest some of us are not.

The matter of being wrong is especially important to many of our folk since we are so oriented to "being right." To admit to being wrong (on most anything religious, we may presume) seems to contradict the claim that we are "the right church" and we teach only "sound doctrine."

And yet it is logical to ask brother Hardin to name some of the things he is wrong about, if indeed he says he is wrong about some things. Or is it?

Since brother Sutton is asking us all this question, I would say that if I *knew* some things I am wrong about, I would change my position on those matters to what I believed to be right, so that I would no longer be wrong on them. So as I write these words 1 have to admit that there is nothing that I *know* I am wrong about. If so, I would change.

So, I think Arnold Hardin really means (since brother Sutton wants him to be *exact*) that he is *probably* (very likely) wrong about some things. But he could not be aware of them and remain an honest man, for as he becomes aware of his wrong he would change his mind. But we can all truthfully say that it is very likely that we hold some views that are erroneous, even when we believe they are right. Why? Because as we continue to study and grow we discover that we were wrong in some of our interpretations. It is extremely unlikely that we are ever right on every point! Life teaches us that the poet is right: *To err is human, to forgive is divine.*

Or if brother Sutton wants Scripture: "We all make many mistakes, and if anyone makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also" (Jas. 3:2), while 1 Jn. 1:8 says "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

If brother Sutton would allow Arnold to admit that he makes mistakes and sometimes sins (which accords to Scripture), he should be willing for him to say that he is wrong about some matters. We do not learn of some of our mistakes until later and some sins slip up on us through deceit, so that we are not always aware of what is going on. Can one not also be wrong on points of doctrine (and is it not most likely, considering our humanity, even for brother Sutton) and yet not be aware of it?

So I am wondering if brother Sutton would have objected had brother Hardin said, "We are all *probably* wrong on some things." And since we are all so flawed in spirit, mind, and body cannot Arnold be allowed to speak absolutely: *we are all wrong about some things.* And without having to name those things.

Spiritual health is something like physical health. Even the "perfect" human specimen has some slight deficiency in his body somewhere, so one can say "We all have physical imperfections," without having to name them. It is an axiom, an *a priori* truth (one that

does not have to be proved) that man is imperfect --- in every way! All men! The apostle does not bother to prove that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." He states it as axiomatic.

Perhaps it is *conceivable*, however improbable, that someone like our Alabama brother is absolutely right about every point of biblical interpretation. If so, he might well be the only person in history to attain such perfection. Arnold is so nearly absolutely right when he avows that we are all wrong about some things that I think we do not need to challenge him.

Take the passage that I was studying only today, 1 Tim. 2:15, where it is said "she shall be saved in childbearing." While I am sure this does not mean that a woman *must* bear children to be saved, I am not sure what it does mean, though I have my interpretation. There are hundreds of such difficult passages in both Testaments, including many prophecies that are perplexing. Peter says that even Paul wrote things that are hard to understand. So one could make a list of things he *might* be wrong about.

It is very unlikely that any of us are right on every single point of interpretation, even when we have done the best we can in our study and suppose ourselves to be right. Most of us change our minds from time to time, when we learn we are wrong. It is virtually certain that at no time in our lives, however seasoned we are in the word, we have learned all there is to be learned.

Praise God that our salvation is rooted in his grace, not in our perfect knowledge or obedience! The Bible makes no big deal about our sincerely holding views that may be wrong ("Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things" --- Ro. 14:1). The big deal is when we are *wrong in heart, wrong in spirit, wrong in our treatment of each other, wrong in our attitude toward God and his word.*

"On this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word." (Isa. 66:2) --- *the Editor*

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RENEWAL THROUGH RECOVERY (4)

W. Carl Ketcherside

I doubt that even the most prejudiced clergyman among the Churches of Christ would credit Alan Richardson with writing something just to favor us. This eminent editor of the prestigious volume "A Theological Word Book of the Bible" makes a distinct difference between preaching and teaching. The Professor of Christian Theology at the University of

Nottingham, he is well qualified to point out that this distinction existed in the Greek, and was manifested in the word *kerygma*, the thing preached, and in *didache*, the teaching. He says, "In The N. T. preaching has nothing to do with the delivery of sermons to the converted, which it usually means today, but always concerns the proclamation of 'the good tidings of God' to the non-Christian world."

And this illustrates how elastic slogans can become and how they can be stretched. Our special one, which we tend to proclaim louder and longer than we do the Good News, is "We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent." One thing we certainly do not do is to speak *as* the Bible speaks. Actually we deliver sermons, another word not found in the Bible, upon any and every subject which rubs us the wrong way at the time, and call that "preaching the gospel." We should be ashamed to live and afraid to die because of our actions.

It was not by accident that Jesus selected a word which meant to "proclaim as a herald" to indicate what the apostles were to do. The heralds were the broadcasters of the news in that day. They were the media men. Sometimes the news was good, sometimes it was bad. Battles were lost as well as won. So the blessed Holy Spirit came up with another word *euanggelistes*, which always meant a message of glad tidings. It had to do with announcing what God had done for us that we could not do for ourselves. It informed us that the ransom had been paid and we were free at last. It told of the chain being broken and the liberation which followed. It was a message of victory, of triumph, of transcendent joy. It was all that humanity had ever dreamed of.

Jesus was the center of it. He was the way, the truth and the life. Those who were called, and who followed Him, were known as the people of the way. It was grand to see the demonstration of divine power which swept through them. As partakers of eternal life they demonstrated a new dimension of human existence. They willingly laid down their lives for the brethren. The world beheld a species of love never before exhibited. It cut through the red tape of politics, the black despair of immorality, and the gray shadow of death. Men were liberated thoroughly from the past. They became like a new creation. They were born again from above.

But it did not last very long. It never does. The great red dragon managed to dilute it effectively and to betray those who sought to follow Him. And he did it as he often does, by the application of cultural tradition. Three worlds converged and each one contributed its bit. The Roman world gave the structure, the organization and ended with the Establishment. Patterning after the pagan empire which had brought the world to its feet, and held sway and dominance over it, by raw colonialism, it stopped the fellowship in its tracks and reduced men to menial serfs in the organization.

The Greek world introduced its philosophy, which took its place as systematic theology. For generations the church, as the ekklesia began to be miscalled, argued and fought over Aristotelian views, and sought some way of synchronizing them with the revelation of God. As orthodoxy flourished, heretics were created as a spin-off and these were beheaded, burnt at the stake, and otherwise cruelly put to death. Frequently they were much nearer the truth than those who slew them in cold-blood.

The Jewish world gave its legalism, deadening, sterile and stifling. And the departure was complete. Conformity became the order of the day. Men were led to see certain magical qualities in the ordinances. Liturgy was substituted for life. Ritual took the place of redemption. Creeds displaced the Christ. A reformation was eventually attempted. But it borrowed the same old routine. Some say it stole it. It was dressed in new outward garb. But Luther argued with Zwingli about the Lord's Supper. Calvin gave his consent to the killing of Michael Servetus, the Spanish physician. The spirit of intolerance began to be manifested in new ways. But the one thing that made the ekklesia a world-conquering force was conspicuous by its absence.

That one fact was Jesus as *the center.* As men began to make other things the center of their allegiance they fell apart. The sectarian spirit became rife, not because men did not believe in Jesus, but because they were attracted by men, systems, doctrines, and things, which acted as magnets to draw them. Every major sect or party on earth today is such because it rallied around a creed. Every minor sect or party is such because it has emphasized some man, some system, some doctrine, some thing. Whether or not the creed states only the truth makes no difference. It is something other than the true center. And to lure men off center will divide them, fragment them, splinter them.

And to call any of these, or all of them, the gospel is to be guilty of egregious error. To proclaim baptism, the Lord's Supper, some method of financing the proclamation of the gospel, a course of moral conduct, or anything else than Jesus, as the Good News is to deceive oneself and mislead those who accept what he says. Let me say again that what is said may be true, but it is not Him who is *the truth* and the *life*. Jesus is the gospel, just as He is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. For this reason it is said, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord." Jesus is also eternal life manifested and one who knows the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, has eternal life. He may be wrong about many things, but he has eternal life. Eternal life does not consist of knowing the Bible, but of knowing Him.

It was here that all the reformers and restorationists of past days made their crucial error. They made the Bible, instead of Jesus, the center of their fellowship. Immediately this required knowledge of a Book rather than faith in a person as requisite to salvation.

Since the degree of knowledge is always relative salvation was conceived to be unattainable. Those who were asked if they were saved began to say, “I hope to be,” or “If God wills, I want to be.” Jesus became lost in the Bible, the very Book in which were chronicled His life and mighty works in order that men might believe on Him. And he is still lost in the arguments and debates of the various schools of thought in the western world. The Bible itself becomes a source of divided families as witness the argument about “inerrancy of the scriptures.” But fellowship with Christ existed before one word of the Bible was written. The ekklesia, called out by Christ, called together by His Spirit, and centered around Him through faith in His person was alive, vibrant and operating before a book or sentence of the new testament scripture was penned.

This does not mean that we can do without the Bible! Far from it! But we dare not make it our Savior! We are saved by a person. And just as in our homes we can distinguish between our wives and a cookbook, so Jesus can distinguish between his bride and a guidebook. It is in our intimate surrender in union with Jesus that we become one Spirit with Him. And while we revere the Bible as containing a message from heaven we must never confuse it with Him who was “the Messenger” from on high. The faith is not a philosophy. It is not a written code of laws. It is not a compendium of systematic theology. It is man’s technical skills which produce all of these. It is rather a recognition of the man on the white horse, the “theos-logos” of God. Jesus, the conquering hero, is our theology. We must rescue Him from the Bible, just as we must rescue the Bible from the church where it has become lost in centuries of bickering, disputing and debate. We can achieve renewal by the apostolic proclamation. — *139 Signal Hill Dr., St. Louis 63121*

Had there been a lunatic asylum in the suburbs of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ would infallibly have been shut up in it at the outset of his public career. That interview with Satan on a pinnacle of the Temple would alone have damned him, and everything that happened after could but have confirmed the diagnosis. --- *Havolock Ellis*

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BOOK NOTES

We are blessed that *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* by Robert Richardson, two volumes in one, continues to be in print, and we will send you a copy for 21.95 postpaid. Earl West, the publisher and leading Church of Christ historian, is issuing a new volume on *Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm.* If you are interested in our history, you will want this biography of a pivotal personality. To be published in August at 14.95 postpaid. We will reserve you a copy.

We can send you *In Search of God's Ideal Woman* by Dorothy Pape for 6.95 postpaid. It is a brilliant study of women both in the New Testament and history, and she takes on the difficult passages.

It may be old but it stays in print as one of the most important works of its kind. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim is a classic work of 1400 pages, two volumes in one. 19.95 postpaid.

The old Daily Bible Study by William Barclay on the NT, which is still available, now includes the Old Testament, by different authors, but it retains format and purpose of Barclay. Already available is Genesis (2 vols.), Exodus, Psalms (two volumes), Daniel, Leviticus, Numbers, Ezekiel, Samuel. I find them delightful and informative, and we can send them to you one volume at a time if you like, 7.95 each, postpaid.

James S. Evans is now at Princeton Seminary studying for the ministry, but he is a dyslexic who refused to accept defeat. This is a story of enduring faith that you will want to share with someone who is fighting an uphill battle. An ideal gift at 10.95 hardcover, postpaid.

James Barr is one of the church's most seminal writers and is always worth reading. You will appreciate his *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism.* Now and again, along with the Bible, you should read a book about the Bible. 9.95 postpaid.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

As are the Mennonites we might all become more concerned with prison reform. The Mennonites point out that the cost for incarcerating one person for a year is three times that of a year at a private college, and yet the prisons are not effective in either deterring others from crime or in rehabilitating the prisoner. They plead for alternatives to incarceration, such as probation programs, restitution, fines, and community service. Prison population has increased 70% in just eight years. Chuck Colson, who now directs a

ministry to prisoners, is also working for prison reform, and he contends that only 20% of those now in prison (the violent offender) should be there; the other 80% could be on alternative programs. What could our churches do to help solve this weighty social problem?

We rejoice to learn that Churches of Christ, instrumental and non-instrumental, in Korea are now united. They met, talked, prayed, and wept together for a year before it could be effected. They began by confessing their sin of division, and they resolved to make the necessary concessions so that they could work together without anyone having to violate his conscience. Each church is left free to use the instrument or not do so, but in gatherings of two churches are more they will be non-instrumental. They now have a united yearly convention and they are one people. It is noteworthy that they were motivated by an old motto of our common heritage, “In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, love.” If it can happen in Korea, why not in America? One big difference may be that they really wanted it, while we suffer from the very serious malady of not wanting.

Arkansas newspapers have announced that Harding University has fired the head of its Bible department, Jerry Jones, one reason given being that he was preaching for a sect. On that basis I fear that all our preachers and professors could be fired! One would suppose, moreover, that that is precisely where the word should be taught, to those that need it most. But the report indicated that Jones was also critical of the way the school favored athletes to the point of being unfair to other students. But firing professors, usually their better ones, is old hat to Harding. Our professors (and preachers) soon learn that there are two things that they must not do, assuming that they get by with getting an education. Don’t do any thinking and don’t criticize the *status quo.* If these rules are carefully observed, the chances of survival are at least fair.

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READERS' EXCHANGE

During the past five years the Lord has permitted us to work with 150 or more Christians (we work only with Christians) who have had demonic control of some part of their lives, body, or being. From an autoptical, empirical, and clinical standpoint I have to disagree with you thoroughly that evil spirits cannot now be invaders of Christians. --- *Grayson H. Ensign, 4334 Pitts A ve., Cincinnati 45223.*

(My position is that while demons are a reality in the world they are because of the work of Christ limited in what they can do. They can and do, of course, invade or possess people, but can they do so without that person's consent (as they once could), and is any more needed to rid oneself of them than the resources of the Christian faith? In short, I do *not* believe in exorcists and exorcism. I could of course be wrong, and brother Ensign, who "delivers" folk is sure that I am. He issues a paper called *Recovery.* If you are interested in what he believes about this, he will be pleased to hear from you. --- *Ed.*)

Yes, we are still here. It is great to be here where the church is growing in number and spirit at a rate higher than most places in the world. The churches in the area are free of the sectarian spirit so evident elsewhere. God bless you, brother. Your influence for Christ extends into many cultures of the world. --- *Richard Chowning, Sotik, Kenya (East Africa).*

A recent response to our latest bound volume of this journal comes from Prescott, Arizona: "Thanks for another truly beautiful book! We are enjoying *Jesus Today* so very much. There is so much wisdom and good old common sense in each article. We wish everyone could have access to your writing." We will send you this double volume for 1981-82 for 8.50 postpaid, if you will enclose a check with your order.

The Stone-Campbell Movement by Leroy Garrett continues to receive wide acclaim, especially from the rank and file (for whom it was written), and the first printing is about exhausted. We will put a copy in the mail to you the same day, postage paid, if you will send us a check for 21.95. You may receive a copy free if you will send us eight new subs or renewals, including your own, and a 24.00 check.

You will remember that we do not publish in July and August. See you in our September issue! We hope to catch up this summer. Grandparenting (amidst emergencies) has gotten us behind.

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